

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1, 3-13, 25, 26, 34, 35, 38-40, 42, 47, and 49-66 are presented for consideration. Claims 1, 9, 34, 47, 54, 58, and 62 are independent. Claims 9, 25, 26, 47, 52, and 53 have been allowed. Claims 1 and 34 have been amended, and claims 2, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, and 48 have been cancelled without prejudice to or waiver of the subject matter contained therein. Claims 54-66 have been added to recite additional features of the subject invention. Support for these claims can be found in the original application, as filed. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

In the Official Action dated June 23, 2003, claims 1-8, 10-13, 34, 35, 38-46, and 48-51 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's background statement with respect to Figure 11 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,118,599 (Spinali). Applicants submit that the cited art does not teach or suggest many features of the present invention as recited in these claims. Therefore this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Initially, Applicants' attorney gratefully acknowledges the courtesies extended to her by Examiner Nguyen in granting and conducting a personal interview on July 24, 2003. In that interview, Applicants' attorney presented arguments distinguishing the claimed invention over the cited art. As noted in the Examiner Interview Summary, the Examiner suggested that the application would be placed in condition for allowance by incorporating the features of claim 2 into independent claim 1 and by including a slightly broader recitation of mutually exclusive

claims 38 and 39 in claim 34. Accordingly, claim 2 has been cancelled and claims 1 and 34 have been amended in response to the Examiner's suggestion in the personal interview.

Favorable consideration is requested.

Newly-presented independent claim 54 recites a supporting structure for supporting an optical element, the supporting structure comprising a first supporting member for supporting the optical element, a second supporting member arranged in an outer diameter side of the first supporting member for supporting the first supporting member, and a plurality of elastic members placed between the first supporting member and the second supporting member in a radial direction of the optical element. The plurality of elastic members are connected to the first supporting member and the second supporting member, and each of the elastic members includes a spring member elastically deformable in the radial direction.

In another aspect of the invention, newly-presented claim 58 recites a supporting structure for supporting a plurality of optical elements, the supporting structure comprising a plurality of first supporting members each of which respectively supports each of the plurality of optical elements, and a plurality of second supporting members each of which respectively supports each of the plurality of first supporting members via a plurality of spring members having elasticity in the radial direction of the optical element.

Applicants submit that the cited art does not teach or suggest such features of the present invention as recited in independent claims 54 and 58.

Applicants' background statement with respect to Figure 11 of the present application (see pages 2-4) discusses an arrangement that includes a lens 101, a first supporting

member 103 and a second supporting member 105. Applicants submit, however, that this discussion is silent with respect to any elastic member as in the present invention recited in claims 54 and 58. In particular, there is no discussion of an elastic member that includes a spring member elastically deformable in the radial direction. Accordingly, Applicants submit that their background statement with respect to Figure 11 does not teach or suggest the salient features of the present invention, as recited in these independent claims.

Applicants further submit that the remaining cited art does not cure the deficiencies noted above with respect to their background statement.

The Spinali patent discloses a barrel 220 and a connecting barrel member 216 having a plurality of spacing members 218 for supporting lenses 208. However, the Spinali patent does not teach or suggest anything regarding an elastic member as in the present invention recited in claims 54 and 58. Specifically, there is no discussion of an elastic member that includes a spring member elastically deformable in the radial direction. Applicants submit, therefore, that the Spinali patent adds nothing to the teachings of Applicants' background statement that would render obvious Applicants' present invention recited in those independent claims.

In yet another aspect of the invention, newly-presented independent claim 62 recites a supporting structure for supporting an optical element. The supporting structure comprises a first supporting member for supporting the optical element, wherein a radial clearance between the optical element and the first supporting member contains adhesive, and a

second supporting member for supporting the first supporting member via a plurality of elastic members having elasticity in a radial direction of the optical element.

Applicants submit that claim 62 is based upon claim 34 and is, therefore, allowable for reasons similar to those discussed in the personal interview. Specifically, the cited art fails to disclose or suggest that the radial clearance between the optical element and the first supporting member contains adhesive, as claimed in claim 62.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that the present invention, as recited in independent claims 1, 34, 54, 58, and 62, is patentably defined over the cited art, whether that art is taken individually or in combination.

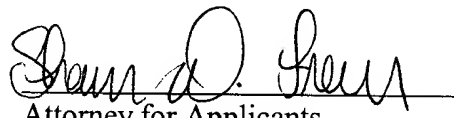
The dependent claims also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in their respective independent claims. Individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicants request that the present Amendment After Final Rejection be entered under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116. Applicant submits that the present amendments reduce the number of issues for consideration and place the claims in condition for allowance. Applicants believe the present amendments were necessitated by the Examiner's comments in the Official Action and were not previously presented because Applicants believed the prior claims were allowable.

Applicants further submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shawn W. Fraser", written over a horizontal line.

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